

Cleaning Matters

Tips and Trends from The Soap and Detergent Association

March/April 2008

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Calendar of Clean

March is ...

- National Craft Month (See *Ask Nancy!* article)
- National School Breakfast Week: March 3–7
- National Sleep Awareness Week: March 3–9
(See *Sleep Tight* article)
- St. Patrick's Day: March 17
- First day of spring: March 20
- National Poison Prevention Week: March 16–22
(See *Poison Prevention* and *Hard Surface Cleaners* articles)

April is ...

- National Public Health Week: April 7–13
(See *News Flash: Against Disease* and *Hard Surface Cleaners* articles)
- National Walk to Work Day: April 4
- Stress Awareness Month (See *Sleep Tight* article)
- Stress Awareness Day: April 16
(See *Sleep Tight* article)

National Poison Prevention Week

How to help ensure the safety of children and adults in your home

Although no one is safe from the risk of accidental poisoning, the youngest members of your household are at greatest risk for accidental poisoning within the home. In one year, 50.9% of all exposure calls managed by the nation's 61 Poison Control Centers involved children under age six.

Sadly, most of the calls that involved young children could have been easily avoided. Research done by the Home Safety Council, a national nonprofit organization solely dedicated to preventing home-related injuries, reveals that in more than 80% of homes with young children, caregivers admit leaving medicines in unsecured locations and more than 50% report leaving household chemicals in places where they are accessible to children.

National Poison Prevention Week, March 16–22, is sponsored by the Poison Prevention Week Council. The Council consists of more than 37 national organizations, including The Soap and Detergent Association, who have an interest in and commitment to programs aimed at preventing unintentional poisonings. For the past 45 years, National Poison Prevention Week has focused on preventing poisonings among children under five years of age—and this year is no exception.

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Poison Prevention Week (cont.)

It's the perfect time to take stock of any hazardous conditions in the home and correct the problems. Here are some suggestions, courtesy of Nancy Bock, Vice President of Education at The Soap and Detergent Association and current Chair of the National Poison Prevention Week Council.

- **Install child-safety locks** on cabinets that house cleaning supplies, medicines, cosmetics, chemicals and other poisons. Never assume a cabinet is too high for a curious, climbing toddler.
- **Keep all household products in their original packages.** Packaging includes useful first-aid information in the event of accidental exposure or ingestion. If you purchase these products in bulk quantities, buy a smaller size of the same product and use this container for refills.
- **Use child-resistant packaging properly by closing the container securely** after each use. Remember, however, that this type of packaging is "child-resistant," not "child-proof." It's not a substitute for keeping products securely out of reach of young children.
- **Read and follow the product-label directions.** Pay particular attention to products whose labels include the words "Caution," "Warning," "Danger" or "Poison."
- **Take out only the amount of cleaning product needed for the job at hand.** Store the rest away securely so there's no chance that small explorers will get their hands on it.
- **Don't mix household cleaning products.** This could release harmful vapors or cause other chemical reactions that can have dangerous results.
- **Don't leave cleaning buckets unattended.** Even those with a small amount of liquid pose a danger to "top-heavy" toddlers. If the child falls into a bucket, it may not tip over and he or she could drown.
- **Schedule cleaning** during "down times" such as nap time or when children are in school or on a play date.
- **Immediately clean up any spillage.** Quickly and safely dispose of rags, paper towels, etc. that you have used for cleanup.
- **Avoid distractions or interruptions** when children are present during cleaning. If you answer the door, take the child with you. If the phone rings, let the answering machine do its job.
- **Know where to call for help.** Post the Poison Control Center phone number (1-800-222-1222), along with other emergency numbers, by every land phone in your home and enter them into your cell phone's address book.

In honor of this awareness week, the Poison Prevention Week Council conducts an annual nationwide poster contest to engage the community in helping to ensure the safety of children and adults. You can view the winning posters for 2007 at poisonprevention.org.

News Flash

Going Beyond Green

SDA's annual convention focused on sustainability

The Soap and Detergent Association's annual convention is the cleaning-product and oleochemical industries' number-one forum for business interaction and networking. It brings together top executives from cleaning-product formulators and marketers, ingredient suppliers and distributors, oleochemical producers and finished-packaging suppliers.

"Going Beyond Green" was the theme of this year's convention, which took place from January 29 through February 2, 2008, in Boca Raton, Florida. The breakfast speakers focused on socially- and environmentally-responsible activities. To support the convention theme, the event was planned with eco-service, eco-cuisine and eco-programming in mind. Many of the convention materials were printed on recycled paper with vegetable-based inks. Electronic technology was used to deliver much of

the communication information for the convention, including the conference website, advertisements, registration and confirmations. Bottled water was even eliminated from all meeting rooms.

"All of these changes that we made to support the convention theme can help influence a change in behavior," said Nancy Bock, Vice President of Education. "We all need to do our part and think of ways we can go beyond green with our daily activities."

The cleaning-product industry is addressing sustainability socially, environmentally, and economically, and this convention, which was the 82nd, showcased examples of the industry's leadership. Watch for more information on sustainability initiatives in future issues of *Cleaning Matters*[®]. Visit www.cleaning101.com/sustainability/principles.html to learn more about SDA's Principles for Sustainable Development.

News Flash

Against Disease: The Impact of Hygiene and Cleanliness on Health

SDA Publishes New Book Detailing Public Health Benefits of Cleaning and Hygiene

The Soap and Detergent Association (SDA) has unveiled a new website, AgainstDisease.com, which houses a new publication that describes the historic and present-day impact of hygiene and cleaning on public health.

Against Disease: The Impact of Hygiene and Cleanliness on Health is an update of the 1984 SDA publication, *Cleanliness and the Health Revolution*. The new book is authored by Dr. Allison Aiello of the University of Michigan School of Public Health; Dr. Elaine Larson of Columbia University; and Richard Sedlak, SDA Senior Vice President, Technical & International Affairs.

Against Disease examines the historical scientific record on the role of sanitation, medical advances, and personal hygiene and cleanliness in reducing the incidence of disease-related morbidity and mortality.

“Too often, the positive contributions of hygiene and cleaning to public health are down-played or forgotten. To help spread the word about the connection between hygiene and health, SDA is making *Against Disease* available for download at no cost on AgainstDisease.com,” said SDA’s Rich Sedlak.

Against Disease recounts that a substantial, yet overlooked component of the health revolution in the late 18th and early 19th centuries was a socio-cultural transformation in personal hygiene and cleanliness. The book examines records of soap production and consumption, bathing and hygiene habits, epidemiological data, and morbidity and mortality data from not only the United States and England, but also other areas of the world, to support this hypothesis.

“Today, the health revolution is still ongoing in the form of personal hygiene and household cleanliness—two important disease prevention strategies,” the authors write. “This book includes an examination of the effectiveness of today’s handwashing and household cleaning and disinfecting practices in removing and killing microbes.

“This fact is clear: good personal and household hygiene practices, although often overlooked in the past, remain vital contributors to good health.”

Hard Surface Cleaners

A guide to what the label tells you

With so many new cleaning products on the market, it's more important than ever to read the labels, understand what the terms mean, and follow the manufacturers' instructions. Nancy Bock, Vice President of Education at The Soap and Detergent Association, offers some explanations.

Disinfectants and Sanitizers

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, cleaning and disinfecting are not the same. While soap and hot water can remove some germs from surfaces when you clean, they can't kill all germs. In fact, they may even spread them around. Use a disinfectant or sanitizing product when you want to kill germs on a hard surface.

Disinfectants and sanitizers come in many forms and each has its own benefits. Check the label to see what you are getting.

- **Disinfectants and antimicrobials** are designed to destroy pathogenic micro-organisms, which are causative agents involved in communicable human diseases. These diseases can run the gamut from the common cold and staph infections to foodborne illnesses and tuberculosis.
- **Sanitizers** are designed to reduce the number of micro-organisms to a safe level by killing them; typically, sanitizers kill 99.9% of these germs.

Any product that claims to kill bacteria or viruses *must* be registered with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). So, if destroying these agents is your goal, look for cleaning products that have an EPA registration number on the product label. For Canadian products, look for the Drug Identification Number (DIN) or the Health Canada registration number.

Be sure to follow the label directions, as many products need to "stand" on a surface for a period of time in order to kill the germs.

Ingredients

For surface cleaners, cleaner/disinfectants and cleaner/sanitizers, active ingredients are listed on the product packaging. The following ingredient function categories are often used in many home hygiene products. Note that not all products in these categories contain all of the ingredient categories.

- **Cleaning agents/surfactants:** Lift dirt and soil and help remove germs from surfaces.
- **Buffering agents:** Stabilize the various ingredients in the formula.
- **Fragrances:** Give consumers a choice of pleasing scents.
- **Disinfecting and sanitizing ingredients:** Kill bacteria, viruses and/or fungi that cause odors, mold and/or illness. Some of the more frequently used active ingredients are sodium hypochlorite, ethanol, pine oil, hydrogen peroxide, citric acid and quats (quaternary ammonium compounds).

"Warning," "Caution" and "Danger" Designations

- **"Caution" and "warning"** are the most commonly used "signal words" for cleaning products. These two terms are interchangeable for household cleaning products. They mean that the product is not likely to produce permanent damage as a result of exposure. However, keep in mind that appropriate first aid should always be given in case of exposure.
- **"Danger"** indicates that accidental exposure to the *undiluted* product could cause damage to the mouth, throat and stomach; or the material could ignite if exposed to an open flame, heat or spark.

The Brush-Off

Care and cleaning of makeup brushes, hair brushes and toothbrushes

Hairbrushes, makeup brushes and toothbrushes are part of our everyday grooming routines. But these aids to helping us look good can harbor bacteria that are anything but good for us. To avoid this, Nancy Bock, Vice President of Education at The Soap and Detergent Association, recommends a regular cleaning and replacement routine.

Makeup brushes: With proper care, a good makeup brush can last for years. To clean it, run the bristles under warm water. Then apply a small amount of liquid hand soap, liquid dish detergent or shampoo and work up a light lather. Rinse the brush until the water runs clear of soap and makeup residue. Using your fingers, gently mold the bristles into their original shape and then let the brush air-dry.

Hair brushes: These are easiest to clean in pairs—either two hairbrushes or a hairbrush and comb. Gently run the bristles of one hairbrush or the comb through the

other brush to remove the hairs that have accumulated. Wet the bristles under warm running water. Apply a small amount of liquid hand soap, liquid dish detergent or shampoo onto the bristles of either the brush or comb. Rub the two together gently so the hairbrush bristles don't fall out and then rinse under warm running water. If any gunk—such as residue from hair products—remains, use a cotton swab to remove the particles; then repeat the cleaning process. This gentle cleaning method is better than soaking. Soaking will erode the rubber on cushioned brushes, damage the finish on wood-bodied brushes, and may twist or curl the bristles on boar-bristle brushes.

Toothbrushes: Thoroughly rinse your toothbrush with tap water after brushing to remove any remaining toothpaste and debris. Replace the toothbrush approximately every 3–4 months or sooner if the bristles become frayed with use.

Getting a Workout with Housework

A simple way to rejuvenate your New Year's resolution

Chances are that if you chose a group of people at random and asked them to tell you what their New Year's resolutions were, losing weight and getting more exercise would be at the top of many lists. But life takes over and New Year's resolutions tend to go by the wayside. One way to incorporate the “get more exercise” resolution into your life is to combine this goal with something we all need to do: clean the house. So here are a few ideas from Nancy Bock, Vice President of Education at The Soap and Detergent Association.

- **Wear comfortable clothing** so that it's easy for you to bend, stretch and move around.
- **Play music.** Choose something with a lively beat that will really get you moving.
- **Alternate upstairs and downstairs tasks.** You'll get the cardiovascular benefit of climbing stairs. Plus, it's good for your leg muscles, too.
- **Perfect your posture.** As you sweep or dust, tighten your abdomen and keep your knees slightly bent. This will strengthen your stomach muscles and take the strain off your back.
- **Choose the old-fashioned way.** Using a broom or a carpet sweeper requires more muscles and energy than an electric vacuum cleaner. Chop food by hand rather than using a food processor. Whip eggs and cream with a whisk rather than a mixer or substitute a hand mixer for the standing mixer. Forego the dishwasher in favor of washing dishes by hand and letting them air-dry.
- **Get pumped.** If you're waiting for the water to boil or the microwave to do its thing, grab a couple of heavy cans and use them as dumbbells. Or, get a little more ambitious and do push-ups. Start with the against-the-wall variety and progress to the ones on the floor.

Sleep Tight . . . Sleep Right

Tips for getting a good night's sleep

Getting a good night's sleep is important. According to information published by the National Sleep Foundation, which has designated April as Sleep Awareness Month and April 16 as Sleep Awareness Day, getting less than seven hours of sleep a night for seven consecutive nights can significantly impair alertness and motor performance. And a growing body of medical evidence links inadequate sleep with anger, anxiety, sadness, and daytime memory loss. University of Pennsylvania researchers found that when study subjects were allowed to sleep only 4.5 hours a night for one week, they reported feeling more stressed, angry, sad, and mentally exhausted, with overall scores for mood and vigor declining steadily during the test period.

Noise levels (too high or too low), a room that is too warm or too cold and/or has too much light, and a noisy or restless bed partner are a few of the environmental factors that can influence the length and quality of our sleep. Another factor is the sleeping surface itself:

A mattress and pillows with the proper body support are essential to a good sleeping environment.

“It's also important, particularly for those who suffer from allergies and asthma, that the sleeping surface be clean and dust-free,” says Nancy Bock, Vice President of Education at The Soap and Detergent Association. Sheets should be changed at least weekly. Other bed linens, including mattress pads, blankets and comforters, should be washed at least four times a year. And don't overlook the pillows! They, too, should be washed frequently. Check the pillow's label for care instructions. If the label is missing, try these general instructions.

- Wash the pillow on the gentle cycle, and then run it through the rinse cycle two or three times to remove all traces of detergent.
- After rinsing, run it through the washer's spin dry cycle at least twice to remove as much moisture as possible.
- Machine dry. Make sure the pillow is dry all the way through; several cycles may be required.

Cleaning Questions? *Ask Nancy!*

Q: What are some ideas for helping my little ones get into the habit of washing their hands?

A: Start by making sure that they have easy access to sink, soap and towels, preferably disposable paper ones. A small, sturdy stepstool may be required to get them to sink-friendly height. Keep your eye out for an unbreakable, refillable soap dispenser with bright graphics that will appeal to your child. Or, consider soaps that are especially designed for kids, such as foaming soaps that come in fun colors and scents, and dispense a single dose; or soaps that have “built-in” timers for optimal washing time, such as vegetable dye that disappears after 20 seconds of washing or a pump that flashes for 20 seconds after the soap is dispensed. Finally, be aware that the best way kids learn is by example. Be sure to wash your own hands at the appropriate times, including before and after food preparation, after using the bathroom, changing diapers, and playing with pets.

Q: My kids love their coloring books, so crayon stains seem to be a fact of life in our house. How can I remove them from their clothes?

A: One solution is to invest in washable crayons. They’re specially formulated to wash off most walls and children’s clothing, and nonporous household surfaces. However, they come in a limited color range, which may not satisfy your young Picassos. So here’s how to remove stains caused by the standard wax-based crayons:

- If the stain is in the form of a blob of soft crayon, freeze the fabric to harden the crayon and then scrape off the excess.
- Place the stained area between two white paper towels and press with a warm iron, transferring the stain to the towels. Continue to do this, changing the paper towels frequently, until the stain is no longer absorbed onto the towels. Changing the paper towels often will also help prevent transferring the stain to other places on the fabric.
- Pretreat with a prewash stain remover and launder in the hottest water that’s safe for the fabric.
- If the stain remains, launder again, using chlorine bleach, if safe for the fabric, or oxygen bleach.

Nancy Bock is Vice President of Education at The Soap and Detergent Association

Clean Ideas

Clean Ideas: The Basic Cleaning Closet

The right supplies for faster and easier cleaning

Whether you're establishing a new household or getting your existing one in order, having the right cleaning supplies on hand will make your cleaning tasks faster and easier. Here's our "dirty dozen." If killing germs is your goal, be sure the label says "disinfectant" or "sanitizer."

- 1. All-purpose spray cleaner:** Designed for quick cleanup on smaller washable areas, such as around switch plates and chrome fixtures, and on greasy surfaces, such as appliances and stovetops.
- 2. All-purpose powder or liquid cleaner:** Mixed with water, these are most often used on large washable surfaces, such as floors, painted walls, countertops and woodwork.
- 3. Abrasive cleanser:** These are designed to remove relatively heavy amounts of soil in a small area and contain a kind of built-in elbow grease that helps reduce the need for hard rubbing. They're available in powder, gel or scouring-pad forms.
- 4. Nonabrasive cleanser:** These cleansers are for gentle cleaning on hard surfaces that are easily scratched, including porcelain sinks and ceramic tile.
- 5. Chlorine bleach:** An effective disinfectant that kills bacteria, viruses and fungi, including molds and mildew.
- 6. Disinfectant wipes:** A convenient way to clean hard surfaces such as countertops, sinks, windows and toilets.
- 7. Glass cleaner:** For easy wipe-down of mirrors, shower doors, glass table-tops and glass-covered photos and artwork. Spray the cleaner on a clean cloth or paper towel, rather than directly onto the surface.
- 8. Mildew stain remover:** Removes stains in grout lines and other places where mold and mildew can appear. As a substitute, mix a solution of 3/4 cup of chlorine bleach to one gallon of water.
- 9. Furniture dusting product:** Choose a product that will capture the dust. Choices include microfiber cloths, electrostatic cloths and dusters, dusting sprays and polishes. Dusting with a dry cloth just spreads the dust around.
- 10. Toilet-bowl cleaner:** Choices include drop-in toilet cleaners that dispense cleaning solution into the water when the toilet is flushed, liquid or powdered cleaners that are designed to remove stains in the bowl, and disposable cleaning systems that eliminate the need for a reusable brush.
- 11. Silver or metal polish:** Take inventory of the metals in your home and select the appropriate polish(es).
- 12. Specialty cleaners:** Take inventory of the surfaces in your home, including stone surfaces, floor finishes, leather upholstery and non-self-cleaning ovens. Cleaners that are specially formulated for these surfaces can do a better job and prolong the life of the surface.